

# Holiday Tips and Activities for Those with Alzheimer's/Dementia

The bustle and change of routine that holiday activities present can be upsetting for a person with Alzheimer's or dementia. Here are some tips to help keep seniors with Alzheimer's/dementia involved in the holiday activities without being overwhelmed or put into a dangerous situation.

- Stretch out the celebration. If opening a lot of presents at once might create a disturbance, then open a few gifts at a time. A low-key approach may not be traditional, but it might save a lot of headache.
- A large noisy party with friends, neighbors, and lots of kids may be too much stimulation for the family member with Alzheimer's. Host small get-together visits instead, stretched out over several days.
- Keep a normal daily routine as much as possible, making the celebrations fit into the daily schedule.
- Create a soothing atmosphere by playing holiday music throughout the day. Mental grooves are deep for these tunes, which makes them especially soothing. Stick to oldies and classics you know the person enjoys.

## Repetitive seasonal activities for those with Alzheimer's/dementia

Repetition that seems tedious to the rest of us is often soothing to someone with cognitive impairment and can stoke feelings of accomplishment and pride.

- **String garlands.** All that's needed is a long heavy thread and a darning needle. Try stringing cranberries, popcorn, even O-shaped cereal (Fruit Loops are cheerfully colorful). Using something edible also provides an extended enjoyment if there is a place outside to place the garland to attract birds so the senior can watch that activity as well.



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- **Fashion paper chains.** These require a bit more dexterity: cut strips of paper, curl them around one another and staple. This is a good project to have an older grandchild supervise while the person with dementia helps in whatever way she can. Use construction paper or, for a really festive look, heavy-stock wrapping paper. Double the fun with decorating the area together.
- **Make pomanders.** Clove-studded oranges to hang or display in a bowl are not only lovely, but their scent may evoke calming, happy memories. Again, these require a little dexterity, but not much. Remember to throw them away after the holidays.
- **Crack nuts.** Put the person to work with an old-fashioned nutcracker and a big bowl of walnuts, pecans and Brazil nuts. This makes for a nice, soothing activity during family gatherings.

Give yourself a challenge to match the tempo of your frail elderly relatives or friends. The holidays are a great time to slow down instead of speed up. Think about all the things you can let remain undone instead of all the things that need to be done.

**Practical Care Continuum** understands the needs of the frail as well as the hectic schedules the holiday season often demands, and can help coordinate home care services to give a caregiver a needed break. Contact us today to learn more.



Source: *Senior's Count*